

A Time of Prayer:

for the Covenant School, for our community, for our world

Welcome to Brentwood United Methodist Church. Tonight, our hearts are heavy in the wake of the shooting the Covenant School. We give thanks for the space and time to be gathered in this sacred space, laying our pain and grief at the foot of the cross.

While you are here, you can simply let the music and peace of this space wash over you. The stillness will be a balm to the chaos and anxiety we have known today.

As you feel so led, you are also welcome to approach the altar rail **and kneel in prayer**. Or you can **light a candle** at one of the candle stands on either side of the front of the Sanctuary under the balconies. Or you can use the **prayer on the reverse side as a guide** for you. Or open a Bible from the pew in front of you and simply **pray through the Psalms**.

If you would like **someone to pray with**, pastors, church leaders, and Stephen Ministers¹ are available to pray with you or with a group. They will be at the front and back of the sanctuary and will be wearing nametags.

*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.*

Psalm 34:18

Tonight, we remember:

Evelyn Dieckhaus, 9

Mike Hill, 61

William Kinney, 9

Katherine Koonce, 60

Cynthia Peak, 61

Hallie Scruggs, 9

¹ Go to bumc.net/care to submit prayer requests, request pastoral care, or to request to be connected to a Stephen Minister.

O God of peace, I come to you breathless. Overwhelmed. Afraid and completely broken-hearted.

How has it gotten this dangerous to be a child? How has going to school become a life-threatening choice? The violence at The Covenant School today is a crime, a loss, a shock, an evil, and a tragedy all in one. A violation of your good commandment.

The three beloved children who went to school to learn and play and grow. The three beloved staff members who went to work to serve and help.

While life cannot be restored, I trust that hope can be.

Lord Jesus, as I turn to you in this tragedy, I first lay **my heart** before you. My heart is broken open. These are my neighbors. This is my community. And so I call on you to make righteous my anger, bring peace to my mind, and open my heart to compassion. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer...

Lord Jesus, I lay before you **each mom and each dad** who is now forever changed by the news that they will not be reuniting with their child today. In their deep grief, and their anger, and their questions, cover them in confidence that you are closer to them than the air they breathe. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, I lay before you **each brother and sister. Each grandma and grandpa. Each spouse and child and cousin and aunt and uncle and friend** whose hearts are broken. Draw them together as families and draw each family close to your Spirit. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, I lay before you **each student** who witnessed a life-changing tragedy today. Who has seen terrible things and heard terrible sounds. Each student who will wonder why. Who will question their safety. Each student who has lost innocence and security. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, I lay before you **the Covenant School**. They have devoted their lives to shepherding hearts, empowering minds, and celebrating childhood. Bless the road ahead as they seek peace, claim their mission, and find their way forward. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, I lay before you **each first responder**. Each officer who heard the calls on their radios. Each officer who stepped into the school. For their steady minds and courageous hearts. Each EMT and doctor and nurse who suffered with the patients they cared for. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, I lay before you **the shooter**. I don't know her name yet, but you do. You called her beloved. You wept with her when she was hurting. And while this unfathomably evil act was *her* plan, *her* doing, I know it wasn't yours. I know this was not your will for her life or for your world. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, I pray for **a future** where this story is no longer told. Where gun violence is uncommon. Where our policies aim to protect our children. Where we lay aside fear and complacency and greed and take on wisdom and action and compassion. Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Amen.